

October 28, 2022

Edward A. Blazel
Assembly Chief Clerk
Risser Justice Center
17 West Main Street, Suite 401
Madison, WI 53703

Michael Queensland
Senate Chief Clerk
B20 – Southeast, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Assembly Chief Clerk Blazel and Senate Chief Clerk Queensland:

In compliance with 2009 Wisconsin Act 78, the Child Welfare Public Disclosure Act, please accept the Department of Children and Families' 2022 third quarter report on alleged sexual abuse of children residing in out-of-home care. The data presented below addresses reports of alleged sexual abuse for the period July 1 through September 30, 2022 and fulfills the Department of Children and Families' reporting requirements under Section 48.981(9)(a), Wis. Stats.

We appreciate the legislature's interest in Wisconsin's child welfare system and their commitment to support DCF, county and tribal child welfare agencies, and the hundreds of non-profit organizations who work to protect Wisconsin children every day. Like you, we are saddened by all cases of child maltreatment and are committed to strengthening families. Wisconsin is fortunate to have dedicated and passionate child welfare workers and we want to recognize and express our appreciation for their commitment and compassion as they engage in this work on a daily basis.

We encourage legislators and stakeholders to reinforce awareness that prevention of child maltreatment is a community-wide responsibility involving all individuals and organizations in the community and to continue to support efforts at the local and state levels to develop a more robust and consistent array of child maltreatment prevention services. Through collaborative and data-driven analyses and discussions, we all can support efforts to provide safe, stable, and nurturing homes for their children.

The following is a summary of the findings in the [report](#):

Number of Reported Incidents: 36

Wisconsin child protective services agencies screened in and investigated 36 reported incidents of suspected sexual abuse to 32 children residing in out-of-home care.

Dates of the Incidents:

The 36 reported incidents are estimated to have occurred between July 2010 and September 23, 2022. Because children disclose abuse in different stages, it is common for children to report incidents months or even years after the incident occurred. Furthermore, in cases of alleged abuse involving non-verbal children, dates of alleged maltreatment are often difficult or impossible to determine.

Maltreatment Determinations:

Of the 36 reported incidents, maltreatment determinations were made for 14 (39%) of the reported incidents, while 22 (61%) maltreatment determinations are pending because the investigations are not complete.

Of the 14 reported incidents where the maltreatment determination was made, 11 (79%) were unsubstantiated (i.e., preponderance of the evidence indicating that sexual abuse occurred was not found) and three (21%) were substantiated.

Nature of Maltreater Relationship:

Of the three substantiated incidents, the relationship of the maltreater to the child was other minor maltreater in one incident, minor maltreater in the placement setting in one incident, and a stranger in one incident. One of the substantiated incidents involved an allegation of sex trafficking.

Types of Placement:

Of the three substantiated incidents, two incidents occurred while the child was placed in a non-relative foster family home, and one incident occurred while the child was missing from out-of-home care.

Location of Substantiated Incidents:

Of the three substantiated incidents of sexual abuse to children residing in out-of-home care, one incident occurred in Eau Claire County, one incident occurred in Milwaukee County, and one incident occurred in La Crosse County.

Ages or Age Group of Children:

The alleged sexual abuse was reported and investigated for children 1-17 years of age. Incidents of sexual abuse were substantiated for three children, one of whom was 10 years old, one of whom was 11 years old, and one of whom was 15 years old at the time of maltreatment.

In closing, thank you for your continued partnership in ensuring all Wisconsin children are safe and loved members of thriving families and communities. Feel free to contact the department with questions or clarification requests.

Sincerely,



Emilie Amundson
Secretary

cc: Governor Evers